# Kids Can Fly Annual Report 2021-2022

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Kids Can Fly– Early Child Development & Parent Support/ Incorporation # 156380 March 2003

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& Administration

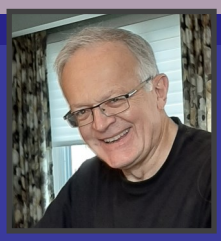
We continued to celebrate our **20th Anniversary** during 2021 and looked back on the impact Kids Can Fly has had on Brantford -Brant. We are proud of all that we accomplished. We were first at bringing parenting centres into elementary schools, filled the gap and need for support for women with post partum depression, hosted the largest affiliate within Canada of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, hosted Roots of Empathy since 2003 and provided it to over 13000 elementary school children so far, created the Early Childhood Education Awards (which have been replicated in other communities), and have continued to follow the research of the late Dr Fraser Mustard regarding the importance of early brain development. We are a small, grassroots charity but have been able to accomplish large things with long lasting impact to Brantford -Brant. Our thanks to Susan Campbell who supported us in developing a 20th Anniversary donation campaign and to Roger Duck of Digital Duck for creating promotional videos which will be keepsakes of our history. **Kids Can Fly is looking forward to the next 20 years and continued efforts to**

## Message from the Executive Director

We successfully navigated another year of challenges due to Covid 19. This is largely due to the contributions of sponsors , donors and volunteers. We have found new ways to support families and have expanded the Post Partum Depression programs as needs increased. Special recognition to Jane Flinders for her creativity in providing virtual programming and outdoor activities for children to keep them engaged. We are looking forward to bringing back face to face indoor programming as well as continuing to grow Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. It provided consistency and brought joy to children through the pandemic.

*Respectfully submitted* *Sharon Brooks ED*

## Message from the Board Chair—Richard Cook



CONGRATULATIONS everyone, on another successful year of Kids Can Fly. When this Covid pandemic began in 2020, media messages told us that we were all in this together. Although it has been a couple of trying, sometimes confusing, years, I think that catch phrase summarizes the approach of our staff, board, volunteers, service partners, donors and financial supporters, and our clients: We really are in this together. We have pivoted, adjusted and strived to keep services and special events vital, useful and available, in often new and amazing ways. Well done.

Special thanks particularly to our ongoing private and corporate supporters, as well as our local municipalities, City of Brantford and the County of Brant, for maintaining their support, and even chipping in some extra when times were difficult. Although Covid and other challenges still exist, I think these past 2 years have shown our ability to adapt and survive. We have a new confidence in our capability to deal with changes.

As we entered this new fiscal year, Kids Can Fly received notice from our founding Executive Director Sharon Brooks of her intention to retire. Sharon has been the vision, passion, and driving force of Kids Can Fly for over 20 years, and our agency and our local communities will be forever indebted to her imagination, hard work and determination to develop an agency to answer outstanding needs of children, women and families. We will miss her leadership very much, but we are excited for what the future holds for her. We wish her all the best. *Respectfully submitted* *Richard Cook*

# The Launch Pad & Launch from Home

**Respectfully submitted by Jane Flinders RECEC**

During the past year the Launch Pad continued connection with over 25 families each week. We were able to distribute approximately 120 activity bags during the year. Programming was offered in video format posted on Facebook weekly. There were live story/music time and weekly Zoom sessions with families. This ended when we started meeting weekly in the park for in person activities story/music time. My cohost Lucy Flinders went off to kindergarten in fall so I welcomed Daisy the Donkey to help me each week.

Most of our on site, in person programming took place at Mohawk Park until the caterpillar invasion was problematic. During July and August we offered programming at Preston Park including songs, stories , snack and creative arts activities. Over this past year we made lots of new friends!

We offered outdoor programming at the park up until mid December 2021 and started back up outside in person in late February. I was very grateful for the support of volunteer Leslie Downie over the past year in our outdoor program. Jessica Flinders was also invaluable offering technical support re video taping of our live presentations.

We are very grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for the amazing video equipment that made this so much easier. Each week on Wednesday (virtual live) and Thursday (on site in park) we were able to provide consistent connection for families within our community. Both the virtual "live" and on site activities were well attended each week. It has been delightful to see families gently engage with each other again in our activities and then later around the playground equipment.

# Storybook Breakfast Picnic

**The Storybook Event was actually pushed back until May in 2022 but we will recap it in this report. *It wasn't safe to meet in person yet.***

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For safety reasons we once again offered our Storybook Picnic rather than the face to face Breakfast. Characters visited the homes of registered children, dropping off food, crafts and their free book. A Virtual program supported the picnic event. We were delighted to raise $27000 and appreciate the loyalty of our sponsors and volunteers.

**Our loyal sponsors stuck with us once again and we are very grateful!**

MARGOT & PAUL WILLIAMSON & FAMILY

JAMES F BOUGHNER FOUNDATION

Longo's

FINDLAY
Personal Injury Lawyers

## 2021-2022 Financial Report

The 2021-2022 fiscal ended with an excess of revenue over expenses of **$4800** and a bank balance plus investments (GICs) of **$311,081**.

A sincere heartfelt appreciation goes out to all of our funders and volunteers whose efforts and support allowed Kids Can Fly to generate over **$224,640** of free programs to the community.

## Financial Highlights

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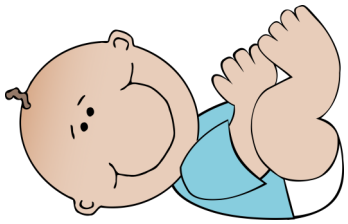
|---|---|
| Total Revenue for the year ended March 31, 2021 | $306,181 |
| Total Expenses for the year ended March 31, 2021 | $301,381 |
| Program Revenue | 73.2% |
| Direct Program Expenses | 73.4% |
| Operating Expenses (minus Public ed/in-kind donations) | 24.3% |

**Respectfully Submitted  Terry Adkins  Treasurer**

**Prenatal Program** A condensed virtual prenatal program was offered in late January on Zoom . This 4 week program was facilitated by Jane Flinders and Lisa Lee.  Special bags were delivered to each of the 4 families who  participated.

Two of these participants have since come out to join our  Parachute Program on site.

We hope to continue to offer this program on demand as it has proven to be  very valuable to parents who have a high risk  of developing post-partum depression.



**HUGS4NewMoms**

**This program wrapped up in March 2022.  It had served an important purpose early in the pandemic but as new moms were able to get out and connect with friends and family  again we felt this program was no longer needed.**

Dr. Ryan Van Lieshout, MD, PhD, FRCPC

Ryan is a perinatal psychiatrist with more than 10 years of experience treating women with psychotherapy and/or medications during pregnancy and the postpartum period. He wrote the Canada's national clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of perinatal depression and co-authored Public Health Ontario's Perinatal Mental Health Toolkit. He has published more than 170 papers on maternal perinatal health and offspring neurodevelopment in scientific journals and is the Canada Research Chair in the Perinatal Programming of Mental Disorders at McMaster University.

## Roots of Empathy

**Due to COVID 19 we made the difficult decision to keep the Roots of Empathy Program on pause**

## CBT RESEARCH for POST PARTUM DEPRESSION

Our shared project with funding from the Ontario Brain Institute came to conclusion in March 2022. Kids Can Fly was proud to work with Dr. Ryan VanLieshout and McMaster University on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy research. Women who have recovered from Post partum Depression, train and facilitate the workshops under the Dr's auditing. Results continue to be very promising due in part to the empathy these instructors can share. This creates an almost immediate bond with the mothers and moves the process forward. COVID 19 forced these groups to go virtual. The positive results were almost equally successful, attendance was improved and it demonstrated that this can be done virtually. This bodes well for providing this method to women in northern Ontario or other remote areas where group attendance would be challenging. Sadly during the pandemic the incidence of PPD increased but we were able to add extra groups and provided support for almost 4 times the women as we had been. Our dedicated facilitators took on extra classes to be sure women were supported. A One Day workshop has been developed by Dr VanLieshout and a train the trainer format which is allowing for expansion to other communities. This means more women will get faster support.

**A real success story for Kids Can Fly .**

## ECE AWARDS were held again in 2021

We did not gather for the banquet but pre-taped the awards and community members could log in to view on November 8. There were some great door prizes courtesy of Child Care Services. We had the largest number of nominations ever and created a RESILIENCE AWARD to reflect the challenges of Covid 19. This was won by Luisa Pappert from Wee Watch, who greatly deserved the honour. The regular award sponsors all continued to support and we were really happy with the interest that this event continues to generate locally. We hope to go back to an in person event in 2022.

E.C.E. Awards Brant

For our **20th Anniversary** year we engaged the services of Susan Campbell—consultant— to assist us in donor stewardship and outreach.
Part of this process included a community campaign before Christmas. We are very grateful to Amanda Grant and Jamie Hignall who shared their stories on the impact that Kids Can Fly programs. Over $20000 was raised to celebrate 20 years!

**River and Jamie**

## Amanda's Story

Dear Friends of Kids Can Fly,

After having three children, I thought I was a pro. But things just didn't feel the same after the birth of my fourth.

**When Liam was born, I found myself in a funk I couldn't shake.** I didn't have any energy and I didn't feel I had anything to give. Household tasks stared back at me, my toddler craved activity and attention, but it was all I could do to keep her and her baby brother fed and clean. I felt like a bad mom, and that just made everything feel harder.

A friend suggested I check out the Parachute Program through Kids Can Fly. **I walked into a room full of moms and babies, singing and clapping along with Jane and I wondered if I could feel that carefree again.** Then the group moved into another room so we could have some adult chat. While most of the moms left their babies with the volunteer "baby cuddlers", I clung onto Liam like a life jacket.

I listened in awe as these women shared their struggles and successes, as Jane assured us of our strength and the resources available to help. I could see that I wasn't the only mom who wasn't perfect and happy all the time. There was help. **For the first time since Liam was born, I allowed myself to hope.**

**The Parachute Program transformed my struggle into confidence.** I slowly opened up. Sometimes the chats were deep and other times the chats were light. But each week, as my babies were cared for, **I could take another deep breath.**

Those moms became my friends, my community. We were building each other up. **Parachute Program welcomed me into a comfortable, safe, non-judgmental setting.**

And now, with a healthy busy three-year old running around as a I write this, I can look back and honestly say that Kids Can Fly and their many programs made me a better mom. **I will forever be grateful that Kids Can Fly provided a safe place for me to seek help and a sense of community.**

Thank you to everyone who supports Kids Can Fly. You truly helped me be the mom I wanted to be, and helped my children soar!

Amanda Grant

**Once again Donn Zver supported Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program by donating pottery ornaments. For the first time we sent volunteers to assist with the process.**
**$7000 was made through community sales!**

This program consistently met either virtually or onsite during this year. In the summer when it was safe, we met weekly at Preston Park for music, connection and discussion about topics important to new moms. Moms also stayed connected in the Parachute Facebook page. When we were not able to meet on site we came together in the online Zoom format. In the late fall we were grateful to offer a 6 week registered Parachute indoors at the Terrace Hill Medical Centre. Six moms and babies were registered in each group. This space was donated by Heidi Nanda. New moms were delighted to come together in the two weekly groups that were offered. We continued to also do outreach with mom care bags and an online presence. Plans were being prepared to partner with the Brantford Public Library to offer Parachute Program at their downtown location this spring—as soon as it is safe to meet indoors again.

**Respectfully submitted Jane Flinders RECE**

In September 2021 **Lisa Lee** joined out Team as the PT Administrative Assistant and Imagination Library coordinator. Lisa has been involved with the Parachute Program as head Baby Cuddler and has volunteered with other events for Kids Can Fly. Along with her sons, she has contributed to video story times and summer activities which we shared virtually during the Pandemic.

**Covid 19 prevented us from launching a pilot project with the County of Brant Public Library in 2021.** Finally we could move forward with the **Sensory Storytime** project for children with Autism in 2o22. We hired Ashley Springall to coordinate it and she will develop 9 week sessions running on Saturdays in County Library locations. Funded by an Ontario Trillium grant we hope after this one year pilot the model will continue to provide a sensitive approach for kids.

Ontario Trillium Foundation / Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

# Simple. Effective.

Kids Can Fly works to build a foundation and love for reading and early literacy by partnering with the Dollywood Foundation of Canada to offer Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. Our continuous commitment is to enroll children aged 0-5 years, promote the program, and raise **$45.00 per child** each year to mail a new age-appropriate book to enrolled children once a month. The Dollywood Foundation of Canada manages the selection and distribution of books. The Imagination Library has a proven impact on increased reading frequency and time spent reading. Recent studies show that Dolly Parton's Imagination Library improves kindergarten readiness and family literacy habits.

**Dolly Parton's Imagination Library continues to provide joy for children as the books come monthly delivered in the mail.** ***This was NOT impacted by Covid 19 and provided consistency to children in an uncertain time.***

Families offer feedback on how much they love this free program! We are so thankful for the sponsorship of community partners and donors, as well as the ongoing efforts of our incredible volunteers to raise funds—another significant contribution from SC Johnson is allowing us to continue to grow and maintain our numbers within the program, enriching the lives and learning of children and families in Brantford and Brant County. A big thank you to many wonderful Dolly Parton Imagination Library supporters, SC Johnson, Donn Zver, the City of Brantford, and many individual donors.

***Respectfully submitted by Lisa Lee DPIL Administrator***

**IMPACT**

**2853 children are currently active in the program (Sept 2022)**

**3731 have graduated from the program**

**28,761 books were mailed between April 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022**

**204,715 books have been mailed in Brantford and Brant County since the program started in 2010**

**We are proud to have the largest affiliate in all of Canada!**